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THE

Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Urban District of Northam

IN DEVON

CO. Devon

For the year 1943

J. EDMUND FRANCIS, M.O.H.

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ANNUAL REPORT, 1943.

1 - Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area.

AREA—4391 Acres.

POPULATION – Estimated Resident, 6265.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1943, according to the rate books, 2029.

Rateable value, £34,940.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £142.

Social and Physical Conditions.

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential; Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort.

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

2 – Vital Statistics for 1943.

Births and Birth Rate.

The total of live births in the District was 107, of which 56 were boys and 51 girls. Four boys and five girls were illegitimate.

There were seven still births registered (2 boys and five girls). One girl was illegitimate.

The live birth rate per 1000 of the population was 17·7, that for England and Wales being 16·5.

The still birth rate per 1000 was ·89, that for England and Wales being ·52.

Deaths and Death Rate.

The total deaths were 94 (39 males and 55 females), but 41 of these were 70 years of age or over.

The death rate per 1000 of the population was 14·3, that for England and Wales being 12·1.

There were 11 deaths of infants under 1 year; 5 of these were illegitimate.

The following Table gives the causes of death in the District during 1943:

CAUSES	MALE	FEMALE
Heart Disease	9	21
Other Circulatory Diseases ...	1	1
Bronchitis	1	1
Pneumonia	1	1
Other Respiratory Diseases (except T.B.)		1
Cancer	6	5
Diabetes	1	
Cerebral Hæmorrhage	4	6
Influenza	2	2
Gastric Ulcer	1	
Other Digestive Diseases	1	2
Nephritis		2
Tuberculosis (Respiratory) .	2	1
Do. (other forms) ...		1
Premature Birth	2	1
Congenital Malformation ...	1	1
Road Accident		1
Other Violent Causes	1	3
All other causes	4	4
Diarrhœa in Children under 2 ...	2	1
Total ...	39	55

There were no deaths from Measles, Whooping Cough, or other infectious diseases of children.

3 – General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

(1) Public Health Officers of the Authority.

There are three Public Health Officers for the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, and the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

(2) Nursing Arrangements in Area.

There are two Voluntary Nursing Associations in the District, one for Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill, the other for Appledore. Both Associations employ fully qualified nurses, who also act as midwives.

(3) Hospitals.

The District is provided for by the Bideford & District Hospital, which is supported partly by voluntary contributions and partly by patients' fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains about 40 beds.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935.

(4) Ambulances.

There are now in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance n connection with, and kept at, the Isolation Hospital.

(5) Clinics and Treatment Centres.

A treatment centre for Venereal Diseases and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tubercular patients are admitted at Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

4—Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Northam Water Supply.

The water supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. A scheme to increase the capacity of the reservoir was completed in 1942, adding another 10 million gallons to the former storage capacity of about 30 millions. Owing to the numerous visitors, including evacuees and military in the District, the public are earnestly requested to abstain from waste and to see that leaking taps are repaired as soon as possible.

A periodic analysis, both chemical and bacteriological, of the water is taken annually as a routine. An analysis of the water taken in 1943 is reported as being of a satisfactory standard of bacteriological and chemical purity.

Rainfall for 1943.

The total rainfall for 1943 was 56·01 inches, compared with 48·41 inches in 1942 and 38·39 inches in the dry year of 1921. The highest rainfall was 8·60 inches in January and the lowest 1·65 inches in April.

These figures were taken at Melbury Waterworks (which are about 500 feet above sea level), and are considerably higher than those taken at the Royal North Devon Golf Club at sea level, where 32·58 inches only were registered during the year.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The only river affected by sewage is tidal. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a £2000 piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present scheme is not satisfactory.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature. Complaints of nuisances were all remedied after serving of informal notices.

(b) There are 5 Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

5—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.

There are 23 registered dairymen in the District, 22 producers and 1 retailer. Eighty-eight samples of milk were taken for examination and analysis. Any samples which failed to pass the tests were reported on, and further samples in each case were passed as satisfactory.

Fifty-two inspections of cowsheds were made, and any defective conditions remedied. No evidence of Tuberculosis was found in any milk supplied.

Bakehouses.

There are 6 Bakehouses in the District. All were inspected and found satisfactory.

Slaughterhouses.

All slaughtering is at present carried out at the Public Abbatoir in Bideford.

6—Housing.

173 houses were inspected under the Housing Acts or Public Health regulations. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year. Disinfection of rooms was carried out in 15 cases.

7—Prevention of and control over Infectious Diseases.

During the year eleven cases of Whooping Cough, four of Measles, three of Pneumonia, and one case of Scarlet Fever were notified. The last case was removed to the Isolation Hospital.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out personally by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is supplied free by the Council in necessitous cases.

Tuberculosis

New cases and Mortality in the District during 1943.

Age	New Cases				Deaths	
	Respiratory		Non-respiratory			
	M	F	M	F	M	F
7-17	1	1		1		1
22-30	2	1				1
40-48	4	2			1	
60		1			1	
Total	7	5		1	2	2

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935.